

## **STAYING HEALTHY IN ARIZONA'S DEADLY SUMMER HEAT**

The number one weather-related danger in our country is heat; more people die from it than floods, hurricanes and tornadoes put together. The danger to people from Arizona's high temperatures is three to seven times worse than the rest of the country.

With plenty of heat still on the horizon, the Arizona Department of Health Services and the National Weather Service urge everyone to take precautions against heat related illness.

"Summer time heat is the most dangerous weather phenomenon we face in Arizona," said Ken Waters, of the National Weather Service in Phoenix. The National Weather Service issues Heat Watches and Warnings to let people know which days pose the greatest risk for heat-related illness. ADHS has a similar system set up to help schools, child care centers, and other licensed facilities be prepared for the heat.

"If you're going to be out in the heat, you have to be ready," said Will Humble, former ADHS Director. "If you're exercising or working, start early and be sure to drink a lot of water before you start. If you have a medical condition or are dehydrated, take extra steps to stay cool. And if you have to wait in a parked car, keep the air conditioning running."

Temperatures inside parked vehicles climb very rapidly. Temperatures rise approximately 20 degrees (F) in the first 10 minutes, potentially reaching more than 130 degrees in only 10 minutes. Temperatures in this range can cause serious illness or death in only a few minutes.

People who work or exercise in the heat should drink plenty of water before, during, and after activity and should take frequent breaks in a shaded area. If you have a medical condition, are taking a medication that can dehydrate you or you are already dehydrated, you should consider avoiding strenuous or prolonged physical activity during the hottest part of the day. People suffer heat-related illness when the body's temperature control system is overloaded and the body can no longer cool itself. Symptoms of heat illness include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, nausea, weak but rapid pulse and headaches. People with these symptoms should go to an air-conditioned area, find shade, loosen restrictive clothing, drink water slowly, cool skin with a damp cloth, and rest. If symptoms worsen, call 9-1-1. Seek immediate medical care for the affected person. Heat stroke is a life-threatening illness.

The most effective way to fight the heat is air-conditioning, at home or in a public building such as a mall, library or recreation center. If air conditioning is not available, pull the shades over the windows and use cross-ventilation and fans to cool rooms. A cool shower or bath also is an effective way to cool off. Limit use of stoves and ovens to keep home temperatures lower.

**Other tips to avoid heat-related illness:**

- Never leave infants, children, adults needing assistance or pets inside a parked vehicle.
- Increase water intake, regardless of activity level. Don't wait until thirsty to drink water; drink more water than one's thirst indicates.
- Avoid "heat hangover." Continue to drink fluids even after strenuous activity. This will help the body maintain optimum hydration and help prevent the after effects of heat exposure such as headaches and fatigue.
- Avoid beverages containing alcohol, caffeine or sugar.
- Avoid very cold beverages as they cause stomach cramps.
- Limit exercise or outdoor activity between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun is at its peak intensity. If active during this time frame, drink a minimum of 16 to 32 ounces of water each hour.
- Some medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, may increase the risk of heat-related illness. Consult your healthcare provider if you have questions.
- Check on a friend or neighbor, and have someone do the same for you during excessively hot days.

**When outdoors:**

- Wear a sunscreen with a minimum SPF 30. Apply at least 30 minutes prior to going outdoors. Re-apply as necessary.
- Rest frequently in the shade so the body's temperature has a chance to recover.
- If unaccustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment, limit exercise or work time and gradually increase the pace.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing; sunglasses to protect the eyes; and a wide-brimmed hat to provide shade and keep the head cool.
- Take special precaution with infants and young children by dressing them in loose, cool clothing and shading their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella. Protect their feet with shoes.